

Excerpts from "The Odyssey"

Odysseus and the Cyclops

Background:

On the way home from the Trojan War, Odysseus and his crew met the Cyclops, Polyphemus, who was a one-eyed giant. Polyphemus shut them in a cave and began to devour the men, one by one. Odysseus had to think of a plan to escape. He told Polyphemus that his name is "Nobody." Then Odysseus stalled for time by giving the Cyclops glass after glass of wine. Polyphemus soon was drunk and fell asleep. Odysseus and his men took a large olive branch, put it in the fire, and used it to blind Polyphemus. Then, they made their escape and returned to their ships.

Excerpt :

"So you ask me the name I'm known by, Cyclops?

I will tell you... 'Nobody' – that's my name. Nobody—
so my mother and father call me, and all my friends."

...I thrust our stake in a bed of embers

to get it red-hot and rallied my comrades:

"Courage—no panic, no one hang back now!"

...I dragged it from the flames, my men clustering round
as some God breathed enormous courage through us all.

Hoisting high that olive stake with its stabbing point,
straight into the monster's eye they bore it hard—

...he bellowed out for help from his neighbor cyclopes...

Hearing his cries, they lumbered up from every side
and hulking round his cavern, asked what ailed him.

"*Nobody*, friends"—Polyphemus bellowed back from his cave—

"Nobody's killing me now by fraud and not by force!"

...They lumbered off, but laughter filled my heart

to think how nobody's name—my great cunning stroke—
had duped them all.